



# Teen Health Guide:

## Diet, Hydration, Exercise, and Supplements

### Nutrition

- Eat balanced meals
- Eat **carbohydrates** for energy. Include whole grains (brown rice, quinoa, oats), fruits, and veggies.
- Include **proteins** for muscle growth, repair, and overall health. Common protein sources include lean meats (chicken, turkey, and fish), eggs, and dairy products (1% milk, low-fat yogurt, and cheese). For plant-based options, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, and soy products like tofu and tempeh are great. Quinoa is a great protein choice.
- Choose **healthy fats** to help with brain development and hormone production. Good options include avocados, eggs, nuts (pistachios, walnuts, almonds), seeds (pumpkin, flax, and chia seeds), and olive oil.
- Don't forget about **fiber**. Fiber is important for gut health and helps stabilize blood sugar. Great fiber sources include flax seeds, chia seeds, vegetables, and beans.

### Fluid Intake

- **Water First:** Hydrate with water instead of sugary drinks, which can lead to health issues such as weight gain, cavities, and diabetes.
- **Limit Sugary and Caffeinated Beverages:** Soda, energy drinks, and sweetened waters can lead to poor concentration, anxiety, and sleep problems. The recommended **caffeine limit** for teens is no more than 100 mg per day (roughly the amount in 1 cup of coffee)
- Adequate water intake in the morning helps fight brain fatigue in the afternoons.

#### Hydration Tips for Athletes

- **Before Exercise:** Drink 16 oz. two hours before, and 8 oz. 30 minutes prior.
- **During Activity:** Drink 4–8 oz. every 15 minutes.
- **Post-Exercise:** Rehydrate with water or electrolyte drinks for faster recovery

### Exercise

- **Physical Activity:** Aim for 60 minutes per day, including aerobic (jogging/running), muscle-strengthening, and bone-strengthening exercises
- Muscle and bone strengthening activities **for those under 12** should focus on bodyweight exercises, like push-ups and squats, rather than lifting heavy weights. Weightlifting before age 12 can increase the risk of injuries, especially if done without proper technique or supervision, because young bones, joints, and growth plates are still developing.
- With supervision, **teens can begin weightlifting around age 12-14.** Focus on technique rather than heavy weights. Start slowly with light resistance to avoid injuries and allow muscles to develop over time. Avoid "maxing out" since this can strain growing bones and joints.
- Be sure to balance workouts with time off to let your body repair and get stronger.

## Supplements

### Essential Nutrients and Recommended Daily Intake.

For those with a well balanced diet, supplements are often unnecessary. If concerned that your diet may be insufficient in one or more nutrients, keep track of what you eat for a few days. Read the nutritional labels and compare the needed daily amounts to what you typically eat.

Vitamin/ Mineral	Amount needed per day and why (14-18 yrs)	Dietary sources
Vitamin D	600 IU – For bone health and immune system strength	yogurt, eggs, milk, fortified orange juice, fortified cereals, pork loin, fish (salmon, trout, and tuna)
Calcium	1,300 mg - for bone growth and maintenance	milk, yogurt, cheese, broccoli, kale, turnip greens, oranges, chia seeds, almonds, tofu, white beans, figs
Vitamin B12	2.4 mcg - for red blood cell formation and brain function	seafood (salmon, clams, rainbow trout, tuna, and crab), fortified cereals, milk, beef liver
Iron	Males: 11 mg Female: 15 mg For oxygen transport and to prevent anemia	leafy greens (like spinach and Swiss chard), beans (white, red kidney, lentils, and edamame), oats, quinoa, peas, pumpkin seeds, dried apricots, raisins, cashews, sweet potatoes.

### Supplements to Consider (Under Professional Guidance)

- **Creatine:** If recommended by a healthcare provider, the usual dose is 3–5 grams per day for those aged 16 and older, especially if participating in high-intensity sports. Always ensure proper hydration when using creatine. Be sure to choose a safe supplement (see below).
- **Protein:** Usually supplementing with protein powder is not needed if you have a diet that includes lean meat, beans, eggs, milk, and nuts. To check your protein intake, keep track of what you eat for a few days (read nutritional labels) and compare the daily amounts needed to what you typically eat. Recommended daily protein range is 0.3 to 0.4 grams per pound of body weight daily, depending on activity level and growth needs.

### How to Choose a Safe Supplement

- Look for 3rd-Party Verified Supplements from organizations such as NSF International, USP (United States Pharmacopeia), Consumer Lab, or LabDoor.com. These organizations confirm that the product has been tested for purity, potency, and contaminants.
- Avoid products with unlisted ingredients or those that make extreme performance claims, as these may include unsafe additives or be mislabeled.
- Avoid products with caffeine

## Apps

These websites have comprehensive lists of nutrition, health, and fitness apps:

<https://www.safes.so/blogs/fitness-apps-for-teens/>



<https://www.common sense.org/education/lists/best-nutrition-health-and-fitness-apps-for-kids>



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References: American Academy of Pediatrics. "Children should avoid drinks with sugar, caffeine." AAP News., HealthyChildren.org.  
"Performance Enhancing Substances," Tufts University. "Teens, Nutrition, and Exercise: How to Encourage Healthy Habits."